DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 311 491 CS 506 791

AUTHOR Abbott, Eric A.; Yarbrough, J. Paul
TITLE Using Joint Spouse Data To Understand and Predict Newspaper Use and Attitudes.
PUB DATE Aug 89
NOTE 28p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (72nd, Washington, DC, August 10-13, 1989).
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Attitude Measures; Family Attitudes; Marriage; *Mass Media Use; Media Research; Models; Multiple Regression Analysis; *Newspapers; Questionnaires; *Spouses
IDENTIFIERS Journalism Research; *Readership Analysis

ABSTRACT

A study assessed the value of obtaining newspaper readership and attitudinal characteristics from both spouses in a household, in order to examine the influence that one spouse's media behavior may have on the other. A mailed questionnaire received 142 joint spouse responses in a small midwestern city. Results indicated that knowing one spouse's media characteristics and demographics substantially improves the ability to predict the characteristics of the other spouse. The study also developed three possible models of spousal influence that would affect newspaper readership patterns: (1) the traditional role model, in which spouses have little effect on each other's reading habits, each continuing to read what they learned to read earlier; (2) the substitution model, where tasks are divided, with one spouse reading certain areas and reporting to the other; and (3) the sharing model, in which mutual interests developed as a result of the marital relationship cause both spouses to read certain portions of the newspaper. Models two and three suggest that the marriage relationship can play a role in shaping newspaper readership patterns. Results also showed that newspaper reliance patterns of spouses change as they age, with husbands relying more on newspapers under age 45, and wives relying more on them above that age. (Six tables of data are included. Twenty-seven references and an appendix containing the attitude items used in the study are attached.) (SR)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED311491

Newspaper Division

Using Joint Spouse Data to Understand and Predict Newspaper Use and Attitudes

Presented to the Newpaper Division, AEJMC, Thursday, Aug. 10 1989
Washington, D.C.

Eric A. Abbott
Dept. of Mass Communication
Iowa State University
Ames, IA 50011

J. Paul Yarbrough
Dept. of Communication
Cornell University
Ithaca, NY 14653

This study was designed to assess the value of obtaining newspaper readership and attitudinal characteristics from both spouses in a household. Although many studies have examined the different reading and attitudinal patterns of men and women, there have been few attempts to examine the influence that one spouse's media behavior might have on the other.

The present study examined 142 joint spouse responses to mailed questionnaires in a small midwestern city (pop. 60,000). The 142 represented a subset of 595 households (52% overall response rate) surveyed in 1983. Data obtained for each spouse included an 18-item attitudinal scale concerning the city's newspaper, a four-item scale measuring community ties, a score indicating reliance on newspapers for five different types of information, a readership score, years of subscription to the paper, age, and education.

A backward elimination multiple regression analysis was conducted for each spouse. Results showed that knowing one spouse's media characteristics and demographics substantially improves one's ability to predict the characteristics of the other spouse. The strongest predictor of one spouse's characteristic is often the other spouse's matching characteristic.

The study developed three possible models of spousal influence that would affect newspaper readership patterns.

1. Traditional Role Model. This suggests little effect of one spouse on the other. Spouses continue to read what they learned to read earlier.
2. Substitution Model. Surveillance tasks are divided, with one spouse reading certain areas and reporting to the other.
3. Sharing Model. Mutual interests developed as a result of the marital relationship cause both spouses to read certain portions of the newspaper.

Models 2 and 3 both suggest that the marriage relationship can play a role in shaping newspaper readership patterns. An exploratory analysis using readership data identifies areas which only the wife reads, only the husband reads, and those which have shared readership. Readership patterns are then compared to the models.

The study also found that newspaper reliance patterns of spouses change as they age, with husbands relying more on newspapers under age 45, and wives relying more on them above that age.

CS006791

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Eric A. Abbott
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

Using Joint Spouse Data to Understand and Predict Newspaper Use and Attitudes

Eric A. Abbott
Dept. of Mass Communication
Iowa State University
Ames, IA 50011

J. Paul Yarbrough
Dept. of Communication
Cornell University
Ithaca NY 14653

Paper presented to the Newspaper Division, Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication. August 10, 1989, Washington, D.C.

Using Joint Spouse Data to Understand and Predict Newspaper Use and Attitudes

In general, past studies that have attempted to explain newspaper readership or subscription behavior using variables such as age, sex, education and income have found that these variables predict only a small amount of the variance. Greenberg and Kumata (1968), for example, found that sex, age, schooling and income explained 27 percent of the variance in a respondent's newspaper reading behavior (as measured by the number of newspapers the person said he/she read regularly or occasionally). Shaw and Riffe (1979) concluded that demographic variables alone were not sufficient to explain differences in reading in two Tennessee communities.

In response, researchers have added variables, including those based on perceived credibility of the paper (Rimmer and Weaver, 1987), community involvement or ties (Stamm, 1985), parental reading or subscribing behavior (Stone and Wetherington, 1979), and indices of reliance on newspapers (Rimmer and Weaver, 1987). Although the addition of these variables has improved prediction and shed light on the complexities of readership and subscription patterns, there continues to be much unexplained variance. Burgoon and Burgoon (1980), in a larger scale study in four regions of the country, reported R^2s of from .095 to .14 for a number of items including age, income, sex, education, length of residence, mobility, number of adults and children in the household, marital status, a series of items indicating the quality of the editorial mix received, political philosophy,

homeownership, and the newspaper's image. Although age and income were significantly related to newspaper readership (number of days last week that you read a paper), the authors concluded that "variance in newspaper readership accounted for by all of these variables taken together is not large."

Rimmer and Weaver (1987) used three different methods of measuring readership and relating them to a media credibility score. The first method or "Roper-type" asked respondents "where you usually get most of your news about what's going on in the world -- from newspapers, radio. ..." The second method (used previously by Westley and Severin) asked "How often to you read a daily newspaper? Daily? A few times a week? Once a week or less?" The third approach (used previously by Robinson) asked respondents what they read "yesterday." Results showed that "how often a person reports reading a newspaper ... is not consistently related to that person's credibility ratings for newspapers or television news. In other words, there is no consistent correlation between the five measures of newspaper use and the four measures of credibility employed in this study, even after controlling statistically and by partitioning for levels of political interest, education, income, age and sex"(p. 32). The strongest correlations were found for the Roper approach, which the authors stated was likely due to the fact that it measured an "attitude" toward newspapers rather than actual readership.

The present study attempts to approach the problem of explaining newspaper readership, attitudes and other variables in a slightly different way -- by combining a number of the above variables with

similar data obtained from the respondent's spouse. The inclusion of one spouse's readership data as variables predicting readership and attitudes of the other spouse is justified by both current research developments in marriage and family journals, and by a number of mass communication researchers who have advocated inclusion of more household variables, but have only occasionally done so. The authors were unable to find a single study of newspaper readership and attitudes that included data obtained from each spouse, although several studies of television have done so.

Since comparisons with other joint spouse newspaper studies are not possible, the present analysis should be seen as somewhat exploratory. Two central research questions have guided this study:

1. Can the inclusion of one spouse's newspaper data improve predictions of the other spouse's newspaper variables?
2. Can joint spouse newspaper data provide other insights not available from male/female data that are useful to mass communication researchers and media practitioners?

A number of mass communication researchers have advocated more attention to family or household variables. However, bringing in spouse data has been hampered both by the difficulties in obtaining information from multiple family members, and a mainstream theoretical orientation that suggests spouse data would not be useful. In the 1960s and 1970s Steven Chaffee, Jack McLeod and others conducted a series of family communication studies. Although some joint spouse data was obtained (to study co-orientation), the major focus was on the parents' effect on the child's communication and political orientation, not the effect one spouse would have on the other (Chaffee, McLeod and

Atkin, 1971). More recently, Chaffee and Choe (1981) began analyzing "transitional constraints" to newspaper reading, which included changes in marital status or occupational status. "To the extent that newspaper reading is integrated into one's daily habits, we should expect it to be disrupted by at least some of these transitions," they wrote (p.202). Although not significant, they found some evidence for independence of these transitional variables.

Several other studies have focused on the effects of parental newspaper readership or subscribing on children (Stone and Wetherington, 1979; Stone and Windhauser, 1983; and Stone, 1987). They found that the parents' reading behavior was significantly related to that of the child after leaving home. Moore and Moschis (1983) came to the same conclusion in their Georgia study.

One reason why spouse variables have not been taken into account has been due to a theoretical framework that precludes effects. Stone (1987) argues that the newspaper habit begins in earnest during the high school years. Then, in the young adult years (18-24), those who have not already begun a newspaper reading habit might change dramatically. But by the time young adults reach their late 20s, he suggests, their newspaper habits are in place. That is, spouse interactions or changes in marital status should have no effect. The next effect Stone posits is in old age, when readership might decline due to "health, eyesight or finances." Bogart (1981: 83) offers a similar interpretation, noting that newspaper reading grows until the mid-thirties, and then levels off and begins to decline after the age of 65.

Despite this interpretation, Bogart notes elsewhere in his book that married people are somewhat more likely to read newspapers, and that whether an adult child leaves the home or not affects readership levels. This suggests that adult lifestyle changes do affect readership. Marriage and family researchers take a more dynamic view of the communication changes that occur within marriages. Feldman (1964) found that although communication among couples declines slightly over time, discussion of news increases over the life of a marriage. Atwood, Sohn and Sohn (1978) found a significant relationship between the topics a person says he read in the newspaper and those he reported talking about with others. There has been increasing interest in marriage and family journals in studies that measure attributes jointly rather than interviewing only one spouse. These studies have found that data from one spouse about the other's behavior or attitudes often have been found to be incomplete or inaccurate. (Monroe, 1985; Hill, 1982; Thompson and Walker 1982; Quarm, 1981).

Several studies have been done of the relationship between television viewing and attributes of family members. McDonald (1985, 1986) studied the influence one family member has on another with respect to television watched in two communities -- Madison and Green Bay, Wis. Each family member filled out a television diary. Demographic data was taken from a previous study of one of the family members. Demographic variables included income, education, and social class. Results showed that in Madison husbands tended to initiate watching behavior which wives then joined. This was not the case in

Green Bay, although the presence of more children in families there may have influenced program selection. Since demographic data were obtained for only one spouse, it was not possible to compare these variables. McLeod, Fitzpatrick, Glynn and Fallis (1982) summarized television literature in a technical review for the National Institute of Mental Health. In terms of methodology, they noted, "neglected are studies using the family or peer group as the unit of analysis as well as investigations into the processes associated with television use (p. 272). They list three areas where family effects might occur:

(1) Effects of family variables on the amount of time spent with media;
(2) Effects of family variables on the types of material read;
(3) Effects of family variables on attitudes toward the medium;

They conclude that "...few researchers have bothered to analyze family processes as contingent or conditional variables producing different magnitudes of television effects within levels of the third variables or interacting with television exposure to produce significant effects." (p. 282).

Rarick (1973) found three "household" variables to be significant predictors of readership -- income, length of residence in the community, and home ownership. Others have built on this work. Stone developed a group of variables measuring "community commitment," which included home ownership, length of residence, and social interaction in the community. Although these are referred to as "household" variables, they are really little more than demographic variables at the household level.

Stamm (1985:57) notes that the household is an important conceptual unit for explaining newspaper use. Despite the increasing evidence of the importance of these household variables, he states, "it seems to be more difficult to think of the use of newspapers in these terms. We tend to think of the newspaper subscriber and reader as an individual. To conceive of household ties as predictive of (what we regard as) individual behaviors, seems an awkward confounding of different levels of analysis." Despite the increased attention, Stamm found that actual studies often still used individual variables.

From the above, we might conclude that spouses might affect each other's newspaper readership, reliance and attitudes for several reasons. First, structurally, married persons tend to have similar ages, levels of education, interests, etc. Because they share a common media environment, they might be expected to either have or develop over time similar access to media and use patterns of those media.

Second, from the point of view of interpersonal communication, couples tend to talk about the news they are reading in newspapers. By this process, they are likely exchanging not only information about events, but interpretations of the value of the newspaper itself.

The Study

Data for the study represent a subset of a mail survey of households subscribing to a daily newspaper in a small midwestern city (pop. 60,000) in 1983. The study included both the city and surrounding county trade areas. A total of 966 households subscribing

to the city paper were surveyed, and at least one questionnaire was returned from 595 households, a response rate of 61.6 percent. Twenty-two of the 966 had either died, moved, or no longer subscribed to a newspaper. Thus, the adjusted return rate was 63 percent. The Dillman Total Design survey method was used (Dillman, 1978).

When the study was first fielded, it was feared that demanding two questionnaires from each household would drastically reduce the return rate, and also confuse households that did not have two eligible readers. Thus, the decision was made to request that the second individual fill one out too, but not make that a condition of the response. In fact, there was no way to know which households might contain more than one reader. Respondents were told in a letter that "Because we know that readership of the newspaper varies considerably from person to person in a household, we are enclosing two copies of the questionnaire. If there is more than one regular reader of the newspaper in your household, we ask that you pass the second questionnaire along to another member of the household to complete." A total of 188 households (31.6%) returned more than one questionnaire.

The 188 dual responding household questionnaires were examined to separate out husband/wife pairs from others who might be living in the household so that the spouse analysis could be conducted. Age, sex, and marital status were used to sort the cases. If doubt existed (as in one case with a 70-year-old married male and a 23-year-old married female), the case was excluded from analysis. After evaluation, 142 spouse pairs remained. Because these 142 cases represent a subset of the original sample, results should be interpreted with caution.

However, it was felt that the uniqueness of having spouse pairs in a dataset warranted analysis.

Multiple Regression Analysis

To examine the possible contribution that knowledge of one spouse's media attitudes, behavior, and demographic variables might make to similar variables for the other spouse, backward elimination multiple regression analysis was used. The backward elimination procedure eliminates variables with the weakest partial correlation coefficients until reaching the .10 level. All remaining variables are then retained. Resulting beta weights permit comparisons between variables as to their relative contribution given the specific variable mix.

The variables were <u>identical</u> for each spouse. They were:

1. An attitudinal score created by adding 18 questionnaire items dealing with the respondent's attitudes about the city's newspaper. The 18 items were selected from 22 total items by means of a reliability test which showed each contributed to the scale (overall alpha .91). Many of the items have been used in previous media attitude studies (see Rimmer and Weaver, 1987). Each item was answered on a 5-point scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree. They included both positively worded items ("The (newspaper) is respected in the community") and negatively-worded items ("The (newspaper) cares little about what readers think"). A complete list of 18 items is shown in Appendix A.

2. A four-item scale on community ties. Items are:
   (a) I have real roots in this community and it would be hard for me to move away;
   (b) It's important to me to be involved in community or charity work;
   (c) It's important for me to be active in my church;
   (d) I sometimes feel like an outsider in this community.

As was the case for the attitude items, respondents were asked to answer each item on a 5-point scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The reliability alpha for the four items was .70.

3. A score for each individual indicating his or her reliance on newspapers (in general) for each of five different types of news:
(a) local news; (b) area news; (c) state news; (d) national news; (e) international news.
Respondents were given one point for each time they selected newspapers as their major source for each type of information. Other choices were radio, television, magazines, friends/neighbors, or other.

4. A score representing readership of the newspaper. This was the sum of two items: (a) frequency of readership of the newspaper (7-point scale), and (b) time spent on each issue read (5-point scale).

5. Years each respondent has subscribed to the newspaper.

6. Respondent's age (9-category scale).

7. Respondent's education (7-category scale).

As the correlation matrix of these variables shows (Table 1), there are high correlations between spouses for demographic variables such as age, education and years of subscribing to the paper. There are also significant correlations between attitudes, community ties, reliance on the newspaper, and readership, although these latter relationships are far from approaching unity.

Regression analyses were run for each spouse separately to assess how the variables for one spouse could predict that spouse's media characteristics. Then a second regression was run to see what additional contribution the other spouse's media variables could make to the ability to predict the first spouse's characteristics. The reasoning was this: since spouses share many characteristics when they marry, and likely influence each other during the years they live together, it is probable that one spouse's media characteristics can be used to predict the other's.

Table 1
Correlation Matrix: Both Husband and Wife Variables

Variable	His Att.	Her Att.	His Ties	Her Ties	His Rely	Her Rely	His Attn.	Her Attn.	His Age	Her Age	His Sub.	Her Sub.	His Educ.	Her Educ.
His Attitudes	1.00													
Her Attitudes	.39**	1.00												
His Community Ties	.12	.24*	1.00											
Her Community Ties	.20	.17	.60**	1.00										
His Media Reliance	.14	.02	.06	-.07	1.00									
Her Media Reliance	-.05	.09	-.03	-.02	.29**	1.00								
His Media Attention	.15	.22*	.09	.08	.18	.21*	1.00							
Her Media Attention	.23*	.23*	.01	.04	.01	.16	.28**	1.00						
His Age	.21*	.05	.20*	.16	-.32**	-.17	.17	.22*	1.00					
Her Age	.23*	.08	.20*	.20*	-.32**	-.18	.17	.27**	.94**	1.00				
His Years Subscribed	.06	.02	.20	.19	-.27*	-.12	.23*	.29**	.60**	.63**	1.00			
Her Years Subscribed	.09	.01	.15	.18	-.27**	-.16	.17	.29**	.59**	.63**	.94**	1.00		
His Education	-.21*	-.21*	-.22*	-.22*	.23*	.20*	-.07	-.28**	-.38**	-.42**	-.29**	-.30**	1.00	
Her Education	-.08	-.34**	-.14	-.12	.17	.12	-.13	-.14	-.24*	-.28**	-.28**	-.23*	.56**	1.00

*= p<.01 **= P<.001 Minimum number of pairwise cases: 122

Predicting the Husband's Media Characteristics

Results (Table 2) show that knowing her media and demographic characteristics substantially improves the ability to predict his characteristics over what his characteristics alone could predict.

Table 2
Variables Predicting the Husband's Media Characteristics

Variable Predicted	R-Square Husband's Only	R-Square Both Spouses	Std.Beta	Key Variables Var
1. Husband's Attitude	.13	.31	.39	Her Attitude
			.23	His Age
			.22	His Reliance on Newspapers
			-.19	His Education
			.17	Her Education
2. Husband's Community Ties	.10	.45	.56	Her Community Ties
			.14	Her Attitude
			.14	His Reliance on Newspapers
			.13	His Subscribing
3. Husband's Reliance on Newspapers	.25	.31	-.38	His Age
			.27	His Attitude
			.25	His Community Ties
			.22	Her Reliance on Newspapers
			-.20	Her Community Ties
			.18	His Readership
			-.15	Her Attitude
4. Readership Score: Days Read Newspaper + Time Spent Per Issue	.13	.24	.65	His Subscribing
			-.44	Her Subscribing
			.23	His Reliance on Newspapers
			.19	Her Readership
			.16	Her Attitude

While knowing his characteristics alone explain about 13 percent of the variance in his attitudes, for example, adding in her characteristics increases the variance explained to 31 percent. In general, like variables predict. For his attitudes, it is knowing her attitudes that significantly improves the predictive power. For predicting his community ties, it is her community ties that have the strongest standardized beta. For his reliance on newspapers, her reliance is a factor, although not as strong as his age, attitudes and community ties. For readership of the paper, years subscribed is an important

Table 3
Variables Predicting the Wife's Media Characteristics

Variable Predicted	R-Square Wife Only	R-Square Both Spouses	Key Variables Std. Beta	Variable
1. Wife's Attitude Toward the Newspaper	.19	.35	-.32	Her Education
			.32	His Attitude
			.18	His Community Ties
			-.16	His Subscribing
			.15	Her Readership
2. Wife's Community Ties	.07	.42	.58	His Community Ties
			.15	His Attitudes
			-.13	His Reliance on Newspapers
3. Wife's Reliance on Newspapers	.10	.20	.24	His Reliance on Newspapers
			.22	Her Readership
			.20	His Education
4. Wife's Readership: Days per Week Read Paper + Time Spent per Issue	.19	.27	.22	Her Subscribing
			-.21	His Education
			.21	Her Reliance on Newspapers
			.17	His Readership
			.15	His Attitudes

predictive variable for both spouses. However, interestingly, hers is negative. The more years she has subscribed, the less readership he has of newspapers.

Results for the wife (Table 3) are similar in that knowing the husband's media characteristics also significantly improves the ability to predict her characteristics. And as was the case for the husband, for predicting the wife's attitudes and her community ties, it is the husband's similar characteristics that are the best predictors of each. For women, it is also the husband's reliance on newspapers that is the best predictor of her reliance. For the fourth variable, readership, the husband's readership is a factor, but is less important as a predictor than the years she has subscribed, her reliance on newspapers, and his education. His education is negatively related to her readership (when he is more highly educated, she reads less).

Overall, several tentative conclusions are possible from this phase of the analysis.

1. Knowing one spouse's media characteristics and demographics substantially improves one's ability to predict the characteristics of the other.

2. The strongest predictor of one spouse's characteristic is often the other spouse's matching characteristic.

3. Overall, it is his characteristics that are more frequently significant predictors of both his and her media characteristics. His occur 22 times, and hers occur 15 times.

Joint Spouse Readership

Most data on newspaper readers is compiled from individuals, and then assembled to show differences between males and females. Joint spouse research has an advantage in being able to show the dynamic in

readership between husbands and wives for various types of news. Differences in readership may be due to the traditional role expectations for each spouse, or to the particular communication system developed as a part of the marriage. Three possible alternative models are explained below:

1. Traditional Role Model. This model suggests little effect of one spouse on the other's reading behavior. Media roles are developed as a part of each spouse's socialization, and guide wives toward food/society/church news and husbands toward sports.

2. Substitution Model. This model assumes that the pattern of communication interaction that develops in a marriage could alter newspaper readership behavior. In this case, it is suggested that the task of surveillance of one's world can be divided up, with one spouse reading certain types of news (such as births/deaths) and then reporting what was of interest to the other spouse. Thus, one spouse's readership substitutes for that of the other.

3. Sharing Model. This model also assumes that the pattern of communication interaction that develops in a marriage could alter newspaper use, but in a different way. In this case, it is suggested that since spouses might be expected to cultivate like interests, one spouse's great interest in a certain type of newspaper content (such as comics) might stimulate the other spouse to read the same material.

The questionnaire listed 22 types of material appearing in the newspaper, from advertising to world news, and asked each respondent to indicate which ones "you spend the MOST time with or look at the MOST frequently in the newspaper." Results (Table 4) have been divided into six groups based on the differences between what the husband alone spends time with and what the wife alone does.

The left-hand percentage for each type of newspaper content indicates the percentage of respondents who both said they did not spend time with it. The remaining three percentages are percentages of

those cases where at least one spouse spends time with it. Thus, the three right-hand percentages sum to 100. Results show some possible areas of support for all three models. Items with a high degree of

Table 4
Differences Between Husbands and Wives
In Newspaper Items They Spend Time With

Type of News	Neither Spend Time %	Percentage if Anyone Reads: Him Only %	Her Only %	Both %
A. Wife-Dominated Readership				
Food Articles	36.4%	8.6%	77.2%	14.3%
Church News	75.5%	14.7%	78.0%	7.3%
Society News	37.3%	8.8%	69.5%	26.5%
Display Ads	32.7%	10.8%	68.9%	20.2%
Photos	51.4%	14.1%	56.2%	29.9%
Awards, Honors	60.0%	25.0%	52.3%	22.8%
B. Mixed--Tending Toward Readership by Wife				
Advice Columns	30.9%	22.4%	47.3%	30.2%
Letters to Editor	44.5%	31.2%	47.6%	21.3%
Non-local Features	45.8%	21.4%	45.8%	32.9%
School News	55.5%	24.5%	44.9%	30.6%
C. Mixed--Chances Even for Husband, Wife, or Combined Readership				
National News	24.5%	36.2%	27.7%	36.2%
Comics	48.2%	31.7%	33.4%	35.1%
Editorials	58.2%	32.5%	34.7%	32.5%
Business News	39.4%	38.9%	29.2%	31.9%
World News	42.7%	36.5%	33.3%	30.2%
D. Mixed--Tending Toward Readership by Husband				
Weather	56.4%	39.7%	35.6%	25.0%
Local Government	24.5%	45.7%	30.1%	24.1%
Classified Ads	51.8%	45.2%	22.6%	31.7%
E. Husband-Dominated Readership				
Local Sports	48.2%	57.9%	19.3%	22.8%
National Sports	53.6%	70.5%	13.8%	15.7%
F. Categories BOTH Are Likely to Read				
Accidents, Police	22.5%	12.4%	19.2%	68.6%
Local Features	26.4%	17.3%	39.5%	43.2%
Births, Deaths	25.5%	7.4%	50.1%	42.7%

mutual readership (Category F) are those in which sharing of interests may take place. On the other hand, substitutive activity could possibly be occurring in Categories B, C, and D. In Category C, there is about an equal probability that either spouse would be the exclusive reader of a given kind of content. In Categories B and D, the percentages are slightly more in favor of either husband or wife, but there is also the possibility that one spouse undertakes surveillance of a given type of newspaper content while the other does not. The traditional role content for males (sports) and females (food, society news, etc.) show the least evidence for shared readership.

Results show that most-shared topics include accidents, local features and births/deaths. Most-exclusive topics for women are food, society news, church news, display advertising and photos. For men, the most-exclusive topic is sports, both national and local.

These results can only be suggestive and exploratory. To test any of the three models, one would need to match these patterns of readership in a future study with an examination of interpersonal communication among spouses. Longitudinal analysis would be needed to conclusively test these models.

Reliance on Newspapers by Age Groups

A number of studies have come to conflicting conclusions about the effect of aging on newspaper readership and reliance. The majority indicate that older persons have higher readership of newspapers, but several note that readership sometimes tails off after age 65 (Bogart,

1981; Stone, 1987). Burgoon and Burgoon (1980) found a significant and linear relationship between age and newspaper readership. This tendency has also been found by Tillinghast (1981) and Finnegan and Viswanath (1988). One of the most extensive discussions of age and readership is found in Robinson and Jeffres (1981), who compare Simmons, Bruskin, Survey Research Center and National Opinion Research Center (NORC) methods and results. They conclude that three of these four surveys over two decades show a slight decline in readership for <u>older</u> persons, not for younger ones. Only one, the NORC studies, shows a dramatic decline in readership by young people.

Joint spouse data offers a means of further exploring possible declines in readership and reliance of newspapers. Within a household, for example, is there any tendency for one spouse to continue or even increase readership while the other shifts to television or radio? Such tendencies, if they exist, might help explain why studies come up with conflicting results. It depends who is interviewed. To examine this question, the reliance on newspapers scales for both husband and wife were compared by categories of age. (Since there is a very high correlation between his age and her age, only his age was used in Tables 5 and 6). Because of the low number of cases, reliance was recoded to a dichotomous item with "low reliance" meaning naming newspapers as the medium you rely on for none or 1 of the five possible news categories (local, area, state, national international), and "high reliance" being two or more. Results, in Table 5, show two trends, although the low number of cases in certain categories means that results should be interpreted with caution. First, there is a joint

trend toward less reliance on newspapers as one ages. Second, while husbands tend to be the only highly reliant person on newspapers more often in the younger years, this switches by the time the couple reaches their 50s, with relatively more women reporting high reliance on newspapers and their husbands low reliance. Husbands are more frequently reporting reliance on television.

Table 5
Newspaper Reliance by Age for Both Husbands and Wives

Age Group	Both Low Reliance %	Husband High; Wife Low %	Wife High Husband Low %	Both High Reliance %
24-34	20.7%	24.1%	6.8%	48.3%
35-45	18.8%	31.3%	15.6%	34.4%
46-55	35.3%	17.6%	20.6%	26.5%
56+	36.9%	15.3%	28.3%	19.6%

Because the prior studies indicated that the way in which the readership question was asked affects responses, a second table is presented (Table 6) showing results of age by readership computed as the sum of days per week the newspaper is read and time spent per issue. Categories for these variables were discussed earlier. Results (Table 6) show that except for the 35-45 age group, where reported readership is slightly lower, there is a linear trend toward an increase in readership as one ages. There is no linear trend visible in terms of which spouse has exclusive high readership.

In summary, one can conclude from these two tables that one's measure of readership is important, since results indicate decreasing reliance on newspapers but increasing readership as one ages. In terms of reliance, spouse patterns appear to be linear and worthy of further study. This is not the case for readership. One problem with the

readership measure, however, is a tendency on the part of some respondents to say they read fewer days as they age, but spend more time with the paper when they do. This tends to wash out trends.

Table 6
Newspaper Readership by Age for Both Husbands and Wives

Age Group	Both Low Readership %	Husband High; Wife Low %	Wife High; Husband Low %	Both High Readership %
24-34	17.2%	24.1%	13.8%	44.8%
35-45	28.1%	18.8%	25.0%	28.1%
46-55	9.1%	9.1%	27.3%	54.5%
56+	8.7%	13.0%	10.9%	67.4%

Conclusions

This exploratory analysis of the value of joint spouse data on newspaper reading and related variables suggests that further studies using joint data might be valuable both as predictors of newspaper readership and as a means of better understanding how the newspaper functions in the interpersonal network of a household.

This study, based on a subsample in only one community, suggests that spouse variables may be useful as predictors of the other spouse's media behavior. However, more valuable for the future may be the prospects of joint spouse newspaper data for further understanding how the newspaper is used in terms of the dynamics of a household. It opens the door for development of media models that are based on the household rather than the individual, and permits exploration of whether or not a shared model of media use or a substitution model might be more appropriate. It suggests viewing adult newspaper behavior as more dynamic than has been the case up to now.

The methodological problems of collecting such data are formidable. Yet the relatively low joint response rate of about one-third in the present study should not be taken as typical, since respondents were given the choice of whether to have one or more respondents. Higher response rates are no doubt possible. Analysis is also complicated by the doubling of variables for each person added to the study. However, newer data analysis programs are now capable of handling a large number of variables.

Finally, the focus of this study was only on the effect of spouses upon one another. No attempt was made to analyze effects of other living arrangements, which are becoming increasingly common across the country. While the number of extended families, and the number of unrelated adults living together was relatively low in this community, in other areas of the country they would warrant study.

References

Atwood, L. Erwin, Ardyth B. Sohn and Harold Sohn, Daily Newspaper Contributions to Community Discussion," **Journalism Quarterly** 55(3) Autumn 1978, pp. 570-576.

Bogart, Leo, **Press and Public: Who Reads What, When, Where and Why in American Newspapers**, Hillsdale, NJ, Lawrence Erlbaum Asssociates, 1981.

Burgoon, Judee and Michael Burgoon, "Predictors of Newspaper Readership," **Journalism Quarterly** 57(4) Winter 1980 pp. 589-596.

Chaffee, Steven H. and Sun Yuel Choe, "Newspaper Reading in Longitudinal Perspective: Beyond Structural Constraints," **Journalism Quarterly** 58(2) Summer 1981 pp. 201-211.

Chaffee, Steven H., Jack M. McLeod and Charles K. Atkin, "Parental Influences on Adolescent Media Use," **American Behavioral Scientist** 14 (1971) 323-340.

Dillman, Don A., **Mail and Telephone Surveys: The Total Design Method**, John Wiley & Sons, 1978.

Feldman, Harold, "Development of the Husband-Wife Relationship: A Research Report," preliminary report M-2931, "Cornell Studies of Marital Development: Study in the Transition to Parenthood," Department of Child Development and Family Relationships, Cornell University, Ithaca, Aug. 31, 1964.

Finnegan, John R. and Kasisomayajula Viswanath, "Community Ties and Use of Cable TV and Newspapers in a Midwest Suburb," **Journalism Quarterly** 65(2) Summer 1988 pp. 456-463;473.

Greenberg, Bradley S. and Hideya Kumata, "National Sample Predictors of Mass Media Use," **Journalism Quarterly** 45(4) Winter 1968, pp. 641-646;705.

Hill, Wayne and John Scanzoni, "An Approach for Assessing Marital Decision-Making Processes," **Journal of Marriage and the Family** 44(4) Nov. 1982 pp. 927-941.

McDonald, Daniel G., "Spousal Influences on Television Viewing," **Communication Research** 12(4) Oct. 1985 pp. 530-545.

McDonald, Daniel G., "Generational Aspects of Television Coviewing," **Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media** 30(1), Winter 1986, pp. 75-85.

McLeod, Jack M., Mary Anne Fitzpatrick, Carroll J. Glynn, and Susan F. Fallis, "Television and Social Relations: Family Influences and Consequences for Interpersonal Behavior," in **Television and Behavior: Ten Years of Scientific Progress and Implications for the Eighties**,

Vol. 2, Technical Reviews, Rockville, MD, National Institute of Mental Health, 1982.

Monroe, Pamela A., "Spousal Response Consistency in Decision-Making Research," **Journal of Marriage and the Family** 47(3) 1985, pp. 733-738.

Moore, Roy L. and George P. Moschis, "Role of Mass Media and the Family in Development of Consumption Norms," **Journalism Quarterly** 60(1) Spring 1983, pp. 67-73.

Quarm, Daisy, "Random Measurement Error as a Source of Discrepancies Between the Reports of Wives and Husbands Concerning Marital Power and Task Allocation," **Journal of Marriage and the Family** 43(3) August 1981 pp. 521-535.

Rarick, Galen R., "Differences Between Daily Newspaper Subscribers and Nonsubscribers," **Journalism Quarterly** 50(2) Summer 1973, pp. 265-270.

Rimmer, Tony and David Weaver, "Different Questions, Different Answers? Media Use and Media Credibility, **Journalism Quarterly** 64(1) Spring 1987, pp. 28-36.

Robinson, John P. and Leo W. Jeffres, "The Great Age Readership Mystery," **Journalism Quarterly** 58(2) Summer 1981 pp. 219-224.

Shaw, Eugene F. and Daniel Riffe, "Newspaper Reading in Two Towns," **Journalism Quarterly** 56(3) Autumn 1979 pp. 477-487;512.

Stamm, Keith R., **Newspaper Use and Community Ties: Toward a Dynamic Theory**, Norwood, NJ, Ablex Publishing Corporation, 1985.

Stone, Gerald C. and Roger V. Wetherington, Jr., "Confirming the Newspaper Reading Habit," **Journalism Quarterly** 56(3) Autumn 1979 pp. 554-561.

Stone, Gerald C. and John Windhauser, "Young Adults' Content Preferences Based on Morning vs. Evening Reading Time," **Newspaper Research Journal** 4(2) 1983 p. 9-22.

Stone, Gerald C., **Examining Newspapers: What Research Reveals About America's Newspapers**, Beverly Hills, CA, Sage CommText Series 20, 1987.

Thompson, Linda and Alexis J. Walker, "The Dyad as the Unit of Analysis: Conceptual and Methodological Issues," **Journal of Marriage and the Family** 44(4) Nov. 1982 pp. 889-900.

Tillinghast, William A., "Declining Newspaper Readership: Impact of Region and Urbanization," **Journalism Quarterly** 58(1) Spring 1981 pp. 14-23.

Appendix A
Attitude Items Used in Study

Each item could be answered on a 5-point scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Negatively worded items were reversed before the scale was constructed.

1. One of the main things I like about the paper is that it has items about people and events around the Tri-state area.

2. Oftentimes stories have holes in them leaving questions in my mind.

3. News in the paper is stale. By the time I get the paper I already know just about everything I'm interested in.

4. The (newspaper) is balanced in its reporting of controversial issues and activities.

5. Advertisers appear to influence the news content of the (newspaper).

6. Some days it doesn't seem like there's anything in the paper for me. I can read the paper in about five minutes.

7. A lot of people like to complain about the (newspaper), but basically it's a good paper.

8. It makes me mad when those daily newspaper people tell me what to think.

9. The (newspaper) doesn't deserve any awards for the stories it writes about my community.

Listed here are several words and phrases often used to describe newspapers. Please indicate on a scale of one to five, from strongly disagree to strongly agree whether you think that word, or phrase accurately describes the (newspaper).

10. Factually accurate.

11. Is concerned about the community's well being.

12. Respected in the community.

13. Influential.

14. Cares little about what readers think.

15. Reliable -- you can count on the (newspaper) to have the news.

16. Reflects the interests of the entire (newspaper) circulation area.

17. Provides mostly "bad" news.

18. Often includes information that would best be left out of the newspaper.